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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000521

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PINS](#) [GV](#)

SUBJECT: MILITARY PROTEST CONTINUES, SOLDIERS MARCH

REF: CONAKRY 503 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Officer Jessica Davis Ba, Reason 1.4 (b,d)

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Situation on the Ground  
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¶1. (C) On May 10, Guinea's military once again began active protest over pay, corruption, and the lack of a concrete response (reftel). The morning of May 10, soldiers were called to their barracks where promotions of mid-grade military personnel were announced. Shortly thereafter, there were reports of guns being fired in the air from the military engineering base in the suburbs of Conakry. The soldiers were not satisfied by the measure as it did not include salary arrears or the dismissal of senior military officers. Soldiers at Camp Alpha Yaya on the outskirts of Conakry as well as on military bases and barracks in the interior soon followed suit and began firing their weapons in the air.

¶2. (C) At least one person killed in Guekedou, a pregnant business-woman who was struck in the head by a stray bullet. There are reports of between five and seven injuries in Guekedou. There have been no reports of killings or injuries in other areas. Roads into Guekedou have all been blocked. Sporadic gunfire could be heard throughout the night of May 10-11 near military camps in Conakry.

¶3. (C) At approximately 1130 hours on May 11, over 200 armed soldiers marched on foot from Camp Alpha Yaya past the airport and along the so-called autoroute toward downtown. They are demanding to meet with President Conte at Camp Samory Toure in downtown Conakry. (Note: Camp Alpha Yaya is located less than 1 km from the airport; Camp Samory Toure is located in the downtown Kaloum district.) Meanwhile, armed soldiers have left the base in Kindia and entered the town.

¶4. (C) In addition to firing their weapons in the air, soldiers have engaged in targeted property destruction of senior military personnel. On May 10, soldiers fired at the personal vehicle belonging to General Kandet Toure, Chief of Cabinet at the Ministry of Defense. Toure was not in the vehicle, and there were no injuries. At present, we understand that soldiers have surrounded Toure's residence, "holding it hostage." Also on May 10, soldiers ransacked the private residence of Colonel Bambo Fofana, Chief Financial Officer. There are unconfirmed reports that the residence at Camp Alpha Yaya of General Kaba "43" Camara was also targeted.

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Negotiations Continue, But Problems Remains Unresolved  
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¶5. (C) The soldiers remain unsatisfied, even with the

conciliatory measure of promoting military personnel who had not been promoted since 2002. Many of those on the list are soldiers who had not been promoted because they do not have high school diplomas, although they have served for longer periods of time than others who were previously promoted. While these soldiers would receive higher salaries and increased benefits, the announcement made no mention of the salary arrears that are key to their demands. (Note: Based on estimates from the national budget, we calculated that the increased salaries alone would cost the government at least an additional 80,000 USD per month. There is no exact figure for the costs of any of these new measures, because portions of the Ministry of Defense budget remain sealed.)

¶16. (C) More important, the May 10 announcement did not include any leadership change within the armed forces. The soldiers have demanded the dismissal of General Kerfalla Camara, Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, and General Arafan Camara, Minister of Defense, in addition to General Toure and Colonel Fofana. All four of these officers are currently at Camp Samory Toure. While they have not made additional pronouncements, we understand the soldiers are also calling for the removal of the base commanders at Camps Samory Toure and Alpha Yaya, at the road engineers base in the suburbs of Conakry, and at the base in Kindia.

¶17. (C) The National Council of Defense and Security and the Prime Minister have been actively working to prepare a list of retirements/dismissals at the highest levels, but have not agreed on the names of those who would go or their replacements.

¶18. (C) Thus far, President Conte has remained absent from the negotiations and has not addressed the soldiers. It is

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questionable whether he has been fully apprised of the crisis. Conte was reported to be at his residence at Camp Samory Toure this morning. While Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate has not formally said so, soldiers expected to meet with him today for an update on the concrete government measures to address the crisis. This meeting may be overtaken by the most recent events.

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Mission Operations  
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¶19. (C) On the evening of May 10, we sent out a warden notice alerting Americans of the ongoing strife within the military and urging them to stay home and exercise additional caution.

¶110. (C) The morning of May 11, U.S. Mission opened normally and is fully staffed.

¶111. (C) At 0930 hours on May 11, the Ambassador chaired a meeting of the full Emergency Action Committee (EAC) to assess the situation and evaluate our posture. As a result, we issued another security notice and warden message stating that troubles continue within the military, that Americans are not targeted, but that Americans should avoid all military bases and surrounding areas.

¶112. (C) At 1200 hours, in light of the soldiers marching from Camp Alpha Yaya toward downtown, the Ambassador instructed all U.S. Mission personnel and family members to go to standfast. We are issuing a warden notice recommending that private Americans do likewise.

¶113. (U) All Americans are safe as of this writing.

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Last-Minute Update  
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¶14. (C) As of 1250, heavily armed Red Berets have deployed at the Castro Bridge, a key chokepoint where the autoroute and other streets leading toward downtown all converge. According to unconfirmed reports, President Conte has agreed to meet with the mutinous soldiers at the bridge.

MCDONALD